



Commuter Choice Leadership Initiative

A National Standard of
Excellence in
Commuting Benefits

**GRH Phone Forum
Findings from GRH Research
January 23, 2003
2:30 – 3:30 p.m.**

Presenter: Ian Todreas, ERG



Outline of Remarks

- **Background: Why EPA Conducted This Research**
- **How We Conducted Our Research**
- **The Questions We Asked**
- **Results: What We Found**



Background: Why EPA Conducted This Research

- GRH is needed to qualify as a Commuter Choice Employer
- No survey of GRH had been done in over a decade (according to media and literature searches)
- EPA needed a snapshot of state-of-the-art GRH programs and how they work
- There was no clear definition of GRH
- EPA encountered some markets that did not offer GRH services, such as:
 - TMAs in a few large urban areas
 - Some employers based in rural areas



How We Conducted Our Research

- Contacted 46 organizations (i.e., MPOs, TMAs, transit agencies, employers with GRH, rideshare organizations, and universities)
- Geographic distribution: organizations were in 20 states, mostly on coasts
- Contacted 4 organizations that did *not* offer GRH to get a sense of barriers



The Questions We Asked

- A 5-page research protocol (questionnaire) covered:
 - Program start-up (e.g., how did it start, when did it start, how was it funded in the beginning, etc.)
 - Program implementation (e.g., how much time does it take to administer the program, how is the ride provided, etc.)
 - Program success (e.g., how often is it used, is it appreciated, how do you know, etc.)
 - Costs and lessons learned



Results: What We Found

- **Defining GRH**

- There is no hard and fast definition (more like modern art, we know it when we see it)
- We were able to identify 5 common GRH program designs, mostly determined by program host. These program designs are:
 1. *Regional*: any non-SOV commuter can use it (e.g., Miami); usually run by an MPO
 2. *Transit*: any transit pass holder can use it (e.g., Kansas City Area Transportation Authority); run by transit agency
 3. *Rideshare*: other rideshare commuters can use it (e.g., CommuterLink in NYC); run by TMA or rideshare organization
 4. *Local*: any non-SOV commuter who works for a member company (e.g., ABC TMA Boston); run by TMA or local government
 5. *Private Company*: company's own employees (e.g., Wyeth); run by private company



Results: What We Found

- **Common Features**

- **Legitimate uses:** personal/family illness, emergency, driver leaving early or staying late, unscheduled overtime
- Use of **vouchers** with vendors (83% of respondents)
- **Limits** on number of rides a commuter can use (2 to 24)
- **Pre-registration:** Eligible commuters pre-register with the program (57% of respondents)



Results: What We Found

- **Variables**

- **Cost** to commuter: zero to a percentage of a ride's cost
- **Ride type:** taxi, rental car, fleet, transit, and cab
- **Eligibility** (depends on GRH program model):
 - Commuters from a registered company
 - Commuters from a private company
 - Commuters within a specific territory
 - Transit pass holders, rideshare participants



Results: What We Found

- **Sources of Start-up Funding**
 - CMAQ funds, state DOT grants, internal funds
- **Start-up Costs**
 - Range from zero to thousands of dollars
 - Often co-mingled with other funds
 - Difficult to pin down
- **Administrative burden associated with program implementation**
 - Many programs described as “virtually running themselves”
 - “Require almost no time once set up”



Results: What We Found


- **Administrative and cost data by urban, suburban, and rural areas:**

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Administrative (minutes/week per 100 eligible commuters)	10 minutes	15 minutes	15 minutes
Rides/year per 100 eligible commuters	3	6	6
Cost per commuter per year	\$1.50	\$4.50	\$4.85



Results: What We Found

- **Perceived Value by Commuters**

- Surveys by individual programs suggest that 12 to 25% of alternative commuters would drive alone without access to GRH
 - For others, GRH may not cause mode shift, but certainly helps lock in alternative mode participation
 - Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests commuter appreciation; it was called “wonderful” and “a life saver” by those who use and those who don’t use GRH
 - It may be harder for other programs to drive mode shift *without* GRH in place
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Results: What We Found

- **Perceived Value by GRH Managers**

- The premise that GRH is of high value as “commuter” insurance is almost never questioned
- However, there is not a lot of hard data to support this perception
- There is an overwhelming belief that the small administrative requirement for a GRH program is more than offset by benefits to other programs
- Use and level of appreciation of GRH service do not correlate